

## **NWSA at the Crossroads — Part 1**

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Attendees at Reunion #46 expressed concern about NWSA's dwindling membership. This drew my attention because this has been discussed at many previous reunions— with the same proposal to fix, same results.

To find another way that may increase our membership I believe we must answer a basic question. Who are we? One way to answer is by a **NWSA Member Table**. After analyzing the table data we can determine what needs to be done for recruiting and retaining new members.

**NWSA Member Table 2021**

Cohorts	Members	Percent
1930-1939	7	2.10%
1940-1949	67	20.12%
1950-1959	111	33.33%
1960-1969	84	25.23%
1970-1979	55	16.52%
1980-1989	7	2.10%
1990-1999	1	0.30%
2000-2009	1	0.30%
2010-2019	0	0%
2020-2029	0	0%
Total	333	100.00%

I constructed the **NWSA Member Table** above with the help of S/T Miovas. Members are placed in the cohort that they first enlisted or were commissioned an Ensign. We were able to find this information on 333 of NWSA's 373 members. The table illustrates a very significant anomaly concerning membership.

**There are no significant numbers of members from cohort 1980 and onwards!** Why? The digital era happened. The digital era has changed the way the younger generations interact socially and view associations.

The digital era has made the 21<sup>st</sup> century AG rating significantly different from the 20<sup>th</sup> century AG rating. And so are the sailors who staff the rating— they are the digital era AG. They “do” differently. NWSA members must recognize this.

They are also the key to NWSA's future. How do we recruit them? One practical way is through Facebook because social medium is their forte! In early December 2021, with close coordination with NWSA's President, S/T, and Web Editor, I published a notice on the five AG Facebook sites that: “NWSA was looking for new members and directing their attention to the NWSA website for information about the association and how to join”. The aggregate number of AGs who belong to these Facebook sites is over 5,000! Granted, many belong to multiple sites but the number is impressive nevertheless. Facebook is a key NWSA recruiting ground!

We are at the crossroads as to the future of NWSA. People change. Times change. We need to recruit and retain the digital era AG. Recruitment and retention become moot, though, if we fail to meet their needs. Are we up to the challenge?

### **Part 2**

About a week after posting on the five AG Facebook sites about recruitment, I posted again in December 2021. This time to ask site members their reasons for not joining NWSA. I was very surprised at the many,

many responses posted. Most responses were frank and polite. Responses can be broadly categorized:

- Never heard of NWSA till now (via Facebook);
- Not mentioned while on active duty;
- No time— retired from the Navy but still working;
- Doesn't meet my needs;
- Don't know any current members;
- Don't know any reunion attendees.

Here are some suggestions that may help with recruitment of new members:

- Waive the \$20 administrative fee— provided the new member receives The Aerograph digitally;
- Post on the Facebook sites, periodically, requesting articles for publication in The Aerograph;
- Provide a free digital copy of The Aerograph to any nonmember who contributes an insightful article about the AG community that is selected by the editor for publication, and also post it on NWSA's website;
- Allow nonmembers to attend NWSA's reunions.

To help the Facebook AGs decide on whether to join NWSA we need to publish more Aerograph articles about experiences that our members have had as an AG or CWO or LDO. With over 300 plus members the Aerograph editor should be continuously flooded with such pertinent articles! Such articles, when posted on NWSA's website, allow for potential new members to read and possibly begin to build a bond with older AGs.

Our reunions meet many of the older generations of AGs needs; such as, a time to visit old comrades and to talk of things past. Reunion #46 had one of the best venues, in a long time, too! Great job, Jim Romano! There were, however, a significant lack of members from the 1970s cohorts and onwards.

This lack of many members of the 1970s cohort and onwards, at reunions, should be a cause for concern. They need to be here to be part of the critical decisions being made about NWSA's future. Meeting comrades and rekindling camaraderie are important too and may be the deciding factor on whether or not to attend. An analysis being why attend if my peers are not there, why be a stranger? Becomes a not going attendee. Frankly, I don't have a solution. Suggestions?

We are at the crossroads as to the future of NWSA. People change. Times change. Reunions and The Aerograph newsletter have always been key mainstays and strengths for our association. Maybe, though, it is time to rethink, both, as to how best to include the needs of the 1970s and onwards cohorts while continuing to meet the needs of the pre-1970s and earlier cohorts.